TRANSFORMATIVE RELIGION

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TRAINING GROUP

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

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RESEARCH AREA 1

NORMATIVITY

The first research area focuses on the problem of the relationship between normative elements of situated religious knowledge in processes of public deliberation and conflicts of hegemony, whilst extending the scrutiny to everyday regulation processes. It will also take into account that these concepts are contested on the grounds of their apparent power asymmetry and eurocentrism. Since the problem of normativity gains critical relevance in situations where different forms and formations of knowledge meet (and sometimes 'clash'), special attention will be given to transitions and transfers between different social or cultural contexts and the impact such transfers have on the political and public realm as well as on everyday interaction processes against the background of aforementioned public negotiations.

Contested Authorities over Women's Bodies: Religious/secular tensions in abortion debates in Germany, Turkey and Israel

The project is concerned with how conflicts between religion and secularity (i.e., secular and religious discourses) are shaped differently in differing socio-legal contexts on abortion politics in Germany, Turkey and Israel. In order to understand the tension between 'the secular' and 'the religious' in these countries, the project will analyse the discourses of secular and religious social actors. The objective is to understand how 'secular' and 'religious' tensions play out differently by examining how authority over women's bodies is regulated on an everyday level and how social actors have struggled to shape these regulations. The main theses is that secularity is not a universal concept that stems from Christian civilization, but has, in fact, been interpreted differently in different contexts against the background of their respective religious traditions. This is most apparent in the three countries the project seeks to compare. In none of these can one simply contrast the secular state with religion since their particular version of secularity was shaped not only by social, historical, and political forces, but also by Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Hence, three-way-comparison is necessary in understanding contested authorities over abortion.